

St Joseph's Specialist School & College

Amlets Lane, Cranleigh, Surrey, GU6 7DH

Inspection dates 20–21 June 2013

Overall effectiveness	Previous inspection:	Good	2
	This inspection:	Outstanding	1
Achievement of pupils		Outstanding	1
Quality of teaching		Outstanding	1
Behaviour and safety of pupils		Outstanding	1
Leadership and management		Outstanding	1

Summary of key findings for parents and pupils

This is an outstanding school because:

- Students' achievement is outstanding and is improving year on year. Students make rapid progress in all subjects and in their personal development, usually from low starting points.
- Teaching is typically outstanding and never less than good. Staff expect the best of the students and work hard to get them to achieve as much as possible. Sometimes targets are not sharp enough, however.
- The behaviour and safety of students are outstanding. Students are thoughtful and respectful of each other, staff and visitors. They develop excellent social and moral attitudes.
- By the end of Key Stage 4, students attain many national qualifications, including at GCSE level, which celebrate their outstanding achievements.
- Post-16 is outstanding. Last year's results showed all students moved on to college or training when they left the school.
- Students are happy being in school and say they feel safe, secure and well cared for.
- The curriculum is individual to each student and exciting. The school's particular specialism in communication and interaction ensures teachers use a good mix of techniques to enable students to communicate their needs. Signs, signage, symbols and touch-screen are used very effectively by both adults and students.
- The school has an outstanding programme for promoting students' spiritual, moral, social and cultural development. As a result, students are highly respectful towards each other and members of the wider community.
- The headteacher is inspirational. She has established a particularly effective leadership team. There has been a relentlessly successful drive to improve teaching by either improving or removing, weaker teachers.
- Governors are exceptionally well informed about the progress of students and the standards of teaching. They are passionate about providing the very best for the students and they contribute an excellent level of challenge and support to the school's leaders.

Information about this inspection

- Inspectors observed 14 lessons and/or parts of lessons, all of which were observed jointly with school leaders, including the headteacher.
- Meetings were held with staff, pupils, senior and other leaders and the Chair of the Governing Body. In addition, telephone discussions took place with parents and carers and the School Improvement Adviser.
- Inspectors took into account the seven responses to the online questionnaire, Parent View, as well as the school's own surveys of the opinions of parents and carers.
- The inspectors looked at a range of documents including the school's checks on how well it is doing and its plans for improvement, records relating to behaviour, attendance and pupils' progress, the outcomes of external reports commissioned by the unit, and policies and procedures for protecting pupils and keeping them safe.

Inspection team

Sonja Joseph, Lead inspector

Additional Inspector

Full report

Information about this school

- The school provides for pupils with autistic spectrum disorders and complex needs.
- The school has specialist status for communication and interaction and creative arts.
- There are more boys than girls. All pupils have a statement of special educational needs.
- An above average number of pupils are eligible for pupil premium funding, given for pupils who are eligible for free school meals, who are in the care of the local authority or who are from service families. There are no pupils in the school from service families.
- An average number of pupils come from minority ethnic backgrounds and a small proportion of pupils speak English as an additional language.
- The school has provision for Early Years Foundation Stage, although there were no pupils on roll at the time of the inspection.
- The school has residential provision which is registered under the Children's Home Regulations
- The school has a number of awards including enhanced Healthy Schools status, Autism accreditation, Specialist Schools Academy Trust United Kingdom Research Charter Mark, Arts Council Artsmark Gold Award and Basic Skills Agency Quality Mark.

What does the school need to do to improve further?

- Ensure targets for reading, writing and mathematics are always closely linked to students' levels of ability.

Inspection judgements

The achievement of pupils

is outstanding

- Students make excellent progress in all subjects and in their personal and social development because teaching is very well matched to their individual needs and abilities. Many make extremely rapid progress, far exceeding typical expectations.
- Many students enter the school with very low levels of reading and writing skills. The school's carefully targeted intervention programmes enable them to make rapid and sustained progress. As one student observed, 'I used to hate reading; now I go in the library as much as I can.'
- In Key Stages 1 and 2, students make rapid progress through imaginative use of learning spaces, skilful support to help them to communicate and approaches that engage all their senses so they are fully involved in activities.
- All students in Key Stages 3 and 4 make excellent progress in their reading, writing and mathematics. By the time students leave school they attain many nationally accredited awards, including at GCSE A* to C grades.
- Students' progress in communication is exemplary because staff always use a range of communication methods, such as pictures, symbols, signage, objects of reference and information and communication technology (ICT), very effectively to help students understand when to start and finish activities and to express their needs and wishes. In Key Stage 4, students used sound buttons independently to demonstrate their understanding of specific words and to make choices.
- Students with additional needs who are on the autistic spectrum make exceptional progress. Specialist approaches, such as the use of distraction-free areas for learning and the nurture class, are successful in helping students to communicate and relate to other people more effectively.
- Post-16 students achieve outstandingly well. They gain a range of qualifications, well matched to their needs, at levels that exceed those expected nationally. The strong focus on work-related skills and life skills prepares them well for life after school. All students go on to further education, training or employment.
- There are no significant differences in the achievement of students by gender, ethnic group or category of special educational needs. This typifies the school's commitment to promoting equality of opportunity, fostering good relations and tackling discrimination.
- Pupil premium funding is used effectively to accelerate learning for students known to be eligible for free school meals and those in the care of the local authority. Individual and small-group catch-up programmes in English and mathematics as well as targeted mentoring for individual students have resulted in pupils reaching the same levels of development as their classmates.

The quality of teaching

is outstanding

- Standards of teaching have risen consistently since the previous inspection as a result of frequent robust monitoring by senior staff and outside consultants. As a result, all teaching is at least good with much that is outstanding and this has a crucial impact on the students' excellent progress.
- The grouping of students by learning needs and by stages of development, rather than simply by age, has enabled teachers and teaching assistants to create classroom environments which help students to be ready to learn.
- Phonics (linking letters and the sounds they make) and reading are taught particularly well. Students enjoy books from a range of different subject areas and realise that reading is the key to learning, which motivates them to practise at every opportunity.
- Staff are knowledgeable about the students in their care and the subjects they teach. Teachers work in highly effective partnership with specialist therapeutic staff and other professionals to

engage and enthuse students. This enables most to improve their reading, writing, communication and mathematical skills quickly.

- In a highly effective gardening lesson, students developed excellent mathematical understanding of measurement and estimation through considering how much soil was needed in a plant pot.
- In an excellent life-skills lesson, the teacher used a range of excellent questions to lead students into a thoughtful analysis of whether disabilities affect career choices. Appropriate praise and encouragement from staff reinforced good communication skills and ensured all students made decisive gains in their learning.
- Very effective use of resources including use of information and communication technology (ICT), symbols and picture timelines help students with autistic spectrum disorders make sense of the world around them and help them communicate. For example, in a religious studies lesson, the use of objects of reference and visual images helped deepen students' learning and supported their excellent awareness of Buddhist religious practice.
- Verbal feedback during lessons ensures that students know how well they are doing and how to improve their work but some students' individual targets for learning are not always explicit enough to ensure even more rapid progress.
- Teaching in post-16 is very well organised and effective. Students are treated appropriately as young adults, their learning needs are assessed minutely, and relationships between students and adults lead to very positive and productive working partnerships.

The behaviour and safety of pupils are outstanding

- The school is a calm and purposeful place in which to learn. Behaviour is outstanding in lessons and around the school. Students are polite and considerate towards one another and to staff and visitors. They make an exceptional contribution to their own learning.
- Consequently, there have been marked improvements over time for pupils with particular behavioural needs, as noted by decreasing numbers of recorded incidents in the carefully analysed behaviour logs.
- Students speak with warmth about their successes in physical challenges away from school. A recent trip to France provided them with many opportunities to socialise with each other, solve problems and learn about communities whose lifestyles are different to their own.
- Some students recognise that others occasionally display inappropriate behaviour linked to their communication and learning difficulties. Staff manage any incidents of anxious behaviour calmly and sensitively. As a result, students trust staff and learn to manage their behaviour more effectively themselves.
- For those students whose behaviour has given cause for concern, highly effective out-of-class support is available so that no time for learning is lost when students are unable to make it into class.
- Students are very well informed about how to keep themselves safe. They participate in anti-bullying weeks and learn about the dangers of smoking and unsafe internet use. Bullying of any kind is uncommon and when it does occur is dealt with very effectively and immediately recorded, with reports sent to school leaders and the local authority.
- Students say they are happy and feel exceptionally safe at school because it is a caring community where everyone looks after each other. As one student commented, 'The teachers make you feel better about yourself.'
- A minority of parents and carers expressed concern over behaviour but the inspection verified the students' views that behaviour is outstanding.

The leadership and management are outstanding

- The school has not stood still since the time of the previous inspection. The inspirational leadership of the headteacher, in close collaboration with senior leaders, has ensured that a

greater proportion of teaching is now consistently outstanding.

- The subjects and experiences that pupils are offered are outstanding. The school uses its specialist status to keep up to date with current research, takes the most appropriate parts, and adapts them so that they are suitable for working with students. As a result, this has led to an imaginative and wide range of methods and experiences being offered to students to help them manage their autism more effectively.
- Links with speech and language, occupational health and music and art therapists have been particularly helpful in developing the excellent communication systems, which are integral to each classroom and to shared areas.
- The school makes detailed, accurate and precise analysis of its performance at every level. Leaders make very good use of this information to identify where extra help and support are needed to improve the progress of particular students. They recognise that some students' individual targets need to be more explicitly related to students' learning levels.
- Leaders have high expectations of staff and their performance is kept under close review. Staff training is a high priority in the school and arrangements to support colleagues new to the profession or new to teaching in special schools are exemplary.
- There is an absolute expectation that all teachers maintain and are held to account for rigorously high standards. Financial rewards are only given on the basis of performance. Appropriate targets are set for teachers and are clearly linked to the achievement of students.
- The school is highly effective in promoting equality and reducing discrimination wherever it is found so that no group of -students does less well than any other. Consequently, the achievement of students eligible for pupil premium funding exceeds that expected nationally.
- The school's rich and varied curriculum makes a strong contribution to students' personal development. Staff seize every chance to widen students' horizons and broaden their first-hand learning experiences. The school also helps students to acquire business enterprise skills and they have developed their own school radio station.
- The school improvement adviser provides highly effective support in judging the quality of teaching and checking data on the progress of students.
- Many parents and carers are encouraged to become closely involved in their child's education and regularly attend the regular parent and carer meetings.
- **The governance of the school:**
 - The governing body is highly effective and passionate about ensuring that pupils' progress is outstanding. The governing body has received highly appropriate training to ensure that all its responsibilities, including safeguarding, are carried out as required. The governing body holds senior leaders to account effectively and ensures the budget is managed prudently. It has a good grasp of the school's work, including the quality of teaching gained through detailed reports and visits to the school. Reports include information on pupils' attainment and evidence that the use of the pupil premium is helping students to catch up. Governors have a very good understanding of the quality of teaching and use the performance management systems to reward good teachers through progression along the pay scale. These arrangements ensure that additional allowances are linked closely to the school's appraisal of teachers.

What inspection judgements mean

School		
Grade	Judgement	Description
Grade 1	Outstanding	An outstanding school is highly effective in delivering outcomes that provide exceptionally well for all its pupils' needs. This ensures that pupils are very well equipped for the next stage of their education, training or employment.
Grade 2	Good	A good school is effective in delivering outcomes that provide well for all its pupils' needs. Pupils are well prepared for the next stage of their education, training or employment.
Grade 3	Requires improvement	A school that requires improvement is not yet a good school, but it is not inadequate. This school will receive a full inspection within 24 months from the date of this inspection.
Grade 4	Inadequate	<p>A school that has serious weaknesses is inadequate overall and requires significant improvement but leadership and management are judged to be Grade 3 or better. This school will receive regular monitoring by Ofsted inspectors.</p> <p>A school that requires special measures is one where the school is failing to give its pupils an acceptable standard of education and the school's leaders, managers or governors have not demonstrated that they have the capacity to secure the necessary improvement in the school. This school will receive regular monitoring by Ofsted inspectors.</p>

School details

Unique reference number	125456
Local authority	Surrey
Inspection number	402327

This inspection of the school was carried out under section 5 of the Education Act 2005.

Type of school	Special
School category	Non-maintained
Age range of pupils	5–19
Gender of pupils	Mixed
Gender of pupils in the sixth form	Mixed
Number of pupils on the school roll	78
Of which, number on roll in sixth form	33
Appropriate authority	The governing body
Chair	Martin Hollins
Headteacher	Mary Fawcett
Date of previous school inspection	11 May 2010
Telephone number	01483 272449
Fax number	01483 276003
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